

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4234

INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 2882

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, CH, TW

SUBJECT: PRC RELEASES "PRISONERS OF WAR"

REF: HONG KONG 2862

SUMMARY: THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S ACONGRESS AT ITS SECOND SESSION MARCH 17 GRANTED A SPECIAL AMNESTY TO "ALL WAR CRIMINALS IN CUSTODY", A TOTAL OF 293 PERSONS. THIS IS THE FIFTH SUCH PRC AMNESTY FOR WAR CRIMINALS; THE LAST PREVIOUS BEING IN DECEMBER 1964. PROMISES OF A PEKING BANQUET MEETING WITH PRC LEADERS AND OFFERS TO PAY TRAVEL TO TAIWAN SUGGEST THE NEWLY-RELEASED POW'S, MOST OF WHOM ARE FORMER KMT OFFICIALS, WILL BE USED HEAVILY FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES.
END SUMMARY

1. AT ITS MARCH 17 EETING THE NCP STANDING COMMITTEE, ACTING ON THE PROPOSAL OF THE STATE COUNCIL WHICH HAD "INSTRUCTION OF CHAIRMAN MAO AND THEPARTY CENTRAL COM-
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MITTEE", INSTRUCTED THE SUPREME PEOPLE'S COUTT TO RELEASE

"ALL THE WAR CRIMIINALS IN CUSTODY" AND REINSTATE THEIR "RIGHTS AS CITIZENS". ACCORDING TO NCNA OF MARCH 18, 293 "WAR CRIMINALS" WILL BE RELEASED, INCLUDIG 219 MILITARY OFFICERS, 21 PARTY AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, AND 50 SECRET AGENTS OF THE " CHIANG KAI-SHEK CLIQUE;" TWO WAR CRIMINALS OF THE "MANCHUKUO PUPPET GOVERNMENT" AND ONE FROM THE INNER-MONGOLIAN AUTONOMOUS GOVERNMENT". NO NAMES WERE LISTED.

2. THERE HAVE BEEN FIVE PREVIOUS AMNESTIES OF -WAR CRIMINALS", ALL BETWEEN DECEMBER 1959 AND DECEMBER 1964, WITH A TOTAL OF 239 PERSONS RELEASED. WHILE THE VAST MAJORITY OF THESE DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT IMMEDIATELY (AND WERE NOT EVEN NAMED IN THE RELEASES), ABOUT TEN SUBSEQUENTLY BECAME ACTIVE IN THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S POLITICAL CONSULTAIVE CONFERENCE (CPPCC). SEVERAL, INCLUDING GENERAL TU YU MING (FATHER-IN-LAW OF NOBEL PRIZE- WINNER DR. YANG CHEN-NING) AND FORMER KMT LT. GENERAL SUNG HSI -LIEN, ARE STILL TROTTED OUT ON APPROPRIATE OCCASIONS.

3. IN REPORTING ON THE STANDING COMMITTEE'S DISCUSSIONS OF THE RELEASE, NCNA STRESSED THAT INSTRUCTIONS CAME FROM MAO AND WERE SUBMITTED BY CHOU. PUBLIC SECURITY MINISTER HUA KUO-FENG, WHO PRESENTED THE GOVERNMENT'S CASE, CLAIMED THE AMNESTY IS IN KEEPING WITH MAO'S PROELTARIAN REVOLUTIONARY LINE AND PROMOTES THE "PATRIOTIC STRUGGLE OF THE PEOPLE IN TAIWAN AGAINST THE CHIANG KAI-SHEK CLIQUE". HUA PROMISED JOBS, MEDICAL TREATMENT IF NEEDED, SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS FOR THOSE UNABLE TO WORK, AND MONEY FOR TRAVEL TO TAIWAN FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO GO. HE ALSO PROMISED A SEND-OFF PARTY IN PEKING, INCLUDING A BANQUET AND RECEPTION BY PARTY AND STATE LEADERS.

4. COMMENT: THE FREE TRAVEL TO TAIWAN OFFER ACCORDS WITH FEB. 28 CELEBRATION THEME OF INCREAED CONTACTS BETWEEN TAIWAN RESIDENTS AND THE MAINLAND (HONG KONG 2168). THE PEKING RECEPTION GIMMICKRY SUGGESTS THAT THE RELEASED POW'S WILL BE USED TO A GREATER EXTENT FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES, ESPECIALLY VIS-A-VIS TAIWAN, THAN THE EARLIER RELEASEES WERE.

5. AT A TIME WHEN POLITICAL PRISONERS AND POW'S ARE A SENSITIVE ISSUE IN MAY PARTS OF THE WORLD, PEKING STAND TO PICK UP PONTS BY ITS LATEST ACTIONS AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO
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CAPITALIZED ON THIS WHENEVER POSSIBLE. THE PREVIOUS FOUR AMNESTIES HAD NOT BEEN ATTENDED BY MUCH PRC MEDIA ATTENTION EXCPET FOR A FEW SLECTED INDIVIDULALS, SUCH AS THE LAST EMPEROR PU YI AND HIS YOUNGER BROTHER, PU CHIEH, AND THE HANDFUL OF EX-KMT GENERALS WHO WERE NAMED TO THE CPPCC.
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